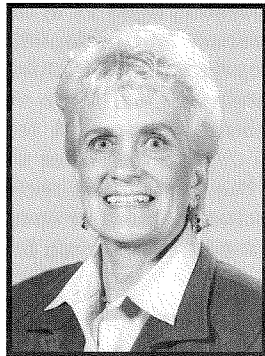


Hammerstrom's

for the people
in the 17th Senate District

Hotline



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MICHIGAN ASSISTS WITH HURRICANE KATRINA RELIEF EFFORTS Michigan residents have shown a tremendous amount of compassion for the many men, women, and children who have lost so much in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. My office continues to receive phone calls and e-mails daily from constituents who wish to help. Local chapters of the American Red Cross are accepting donations. In addition, there are several organizations, both locally and statewide, who are coordinating charitable contributions. For a complete list of various organizations who are accepting donations, please visit www.michigan.gov, and click on the Hurricane Katrina Relief icon. If you would like to make nonmonetary contributions, such as nonperishable food or bottled water, please call the Katrina Relief Hotline, toll-free, at 1-888-535-6136. Please be prepared to provide your name, address, phone number, and the nature and quantity of your donation.

DID YOU KNOW? As of September 11, 2005, the American Red Cross has received \$584 million in gifts and pledges for the hurricane relief effort, of which an estimated \$308.1 million has been received online.

LEGISLATURE ACTS TO PROTECT RESIDENTS' PROPERTY RIGHTS Following a U.S. Supreme Court decision in the *Kelo v. City of New London* case, which allows the seizure of private property for private economic development projects, the Michigan Senate has drafted legislation to help protect the rights of Michigan's private property owners. Senate Joint Resolution E, a constitutional amendment dubbed "MI Home," has been introduced to strengthen Michigan's constitution. The amendment would clearly define what constitutes public use and clearly state that land cannot be taken away for private economic purposes. Senate Bill 693 strengthens Michigan's existing eminent domain statute and clarifies that private business economic development could not fall under this "public use" definition. The proposed legislation is before the Senate Committee on Transportation. If approved, the amendment is slated to be on the ballot for the 2006 election, while SB 693 is expected to be brought before the full Senate later this fall.

PARENTS GIVEN TOOL TO ASSIST IN PROTECTING CHILDREN FROM "ADULT" VIDEO GAMES Currently, most video games are rated based on the suitability of the content for different age groups. A game rated M for Mature, according to the rating system by the Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB), may be suitable for persons ages 17 or older; M-rated games may contain mature sexual themes which can include mild to moderate sexual references and/or depictions, including partial nudity. Parents can use the ratings to decide whether a particular game is appropriate for their children. However, especially in the case of adolescents, a parent is not always with a child who is buying or renting a video game. Despite many parents' efforts, these games continue to fall into the hands of even young children. A recent undercover investigation in six counties found that children as young as nine years old were able to purchase video games rated M or NC-17 at 26 of 58 stores. In response to the results of this investigation, the Legislature recently approved a measure which would give parents the security of knowing their children cannot purchase violent or sexually explicit video games. Senate Bills 416 and 463 passed both chambers unanimously and make it a crime for stores to sell or rent such games to children who are under the age of 17.

WATER MAPS AVAILABLE The Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) partnered with the United States Geological Survey (USGS) and Michigan State University to produce a new database that shows groundwater aquifers and features, users of large quantities of groundwater, and other valuable groundwater information. The Michigan Groundwater Mapping Project was funded and mandated by Public Act 148 of 2003. The maps are available in traditional paper copy and an interactive digital format is available at <http://gwwmap.rsgis.msu.edu>. The map is expected to give a better understanding of Michigan's groundwater resources.

If you would like to receive future issues of Hammerstrom's Hotline via e-mail, please contact me at SenBHammerstrom@senate.michigan.gov